

**Minutes**  
**SELECT BOARD**

Monday, January 4, 2021, 6:00 p.m.  
Via Zoom

*Present for the Select Board:* Bob Armstrong, Erica Goleman, Phil Kantor

*Others present:* Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Louise Beckett, Assistant to the Town Administrator; Alan Singer, Rhyanna McLeester, Steve Dinkelaker, Finance Committee; Ron Sweet, Highway Department

Armstrong called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

*Minutes*

*Approval of minutes from December 21, 2020*

**On a motion from Armstrong to accept and approve the minutes of December 21, 2020, seconded by Goleman, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

*Warrants*

*Approval of the following warrants:*

**On a motion from Armstrong to approve the vendor warrant for \$56,690.77, the payroll warrant for \$106,698.26, and the payroll deduction warrant for \$26,572.60 the vote was unanimous in favor.**

*Meetings Attended by Select Board Members*

Erica reported she had attended no meetings since the last select board meeting.

Phil said that on Tuesday, the 29<sup>th</sup>, The Deerfield Board of Health and School Committees met and discussed sports; vaccinations, and remote learning. Before June it is projected that everyone in town will be vaccinated. As for the schools the focus is on the spread of the virus in schools and community benchmarks. The schools are going back to the hybrid model starting the 11<sup>th</sup> of January. He also noted that the other four towns all have three-member Board of Health committees, yet Conway has a five-member board. Tom said that the board is elected, so any change would need to go through Town Meeting.

Bob had no formal meetings but did visit Delabarre Road with Ruth (Parnall?) after the heavy rain on Christmas day to see if there had been any damage. No damage was noted and the barriers are in place.

*Public Comments*      *none*

*Old Business*

*UCC request for splitting cost of reinforcing foundation wall near Whately Road (\$14,375)*

Bob noted that the Church has not responded to Tom's letter asking for more information regarding the repair of Whately Road.

*New Business*

*FY 2022 Budget - General update*

Tom said that in regard to the FY22 budget that unemployment is at slightly 40+ but not as bad as in other places in the county. The Town had good taxes for FY21 – another favorable indicator, and the state budget is coming in higher than expected. Vaccine distribution is not as good as expected, but at least the technology is there, and there is hope that the vaccine will reach Conway, hopefully earlier in the year.

*Hearing: Highway Department*

There are two budgets: Highway and Building Maintenance. This year we are proposing a realignment of and an enhancement to the staff. As the current custodian is retiring, the proposal is to bring in someone who can do both custodial and building maintenance, plus fill in for the highway department when necessary. Custodial will be removed from the Building Maintenance budget but will now be under the Highway Department. Ron said this will be a \$19,607

addition to the highway budget, which is a relatively small change and benefits would not increase significantly. The new position would be a full-time 40-hour maintenance/custodial position. Tom said that there are repairs in the town office that have been waiting for years - things like painting and general maintenance and Ron added that winter-time activities take up more time in the winter months with plowing, and snow-blowing the town-maintained sidewalks. Currently the custodial position works 22 hours/week. Ron said it made sense to keep all the hours under the highway department to give him more flexibility. Further, Ron said we aren't looking for a licensed person, since the salary would not be competitive for someone with the necessary licensing to do three different jobs. The personnel committee will meet on Wednesday, and then a formal job description will hopefully be available for the Select Board's review.

Asked about repairs in the Highway budget, Ron stated that the fleet of trucks is older, that we are now replacing the older trucks, and once this is done, repairs should be less than anticipated for FY22. Bob asked about the salt budget and why it fluctuates so much. Ron said that it looked like the figures for sand and salt had been reversed for FY 2020 in the spreadsheet people were looking at. Tom said he would correct the error. Ron said he has been the Highway Superintendent since 2013 and has kept under his budget every year, as originally requested.

#### *Proposed letter soliciting preliminary indication of interest in carbon credit market*

Phil said that he has spoken with many large landowners and many are eager to participate. Tom asked about notification those large landowners who reside outside of the area: In the interest of fairness, since the proposal would benefit people in the town, and that we will be asking for maximum participation we should make them aware of the proposal. Phil indicated that there is funding for forest stewardship plans for those owners who do not yet have one. The question was raised as to whether the land needs to be contiguous. Tom will work on a letter to send to the large landowners on the list.

#### *Closing town offices to the public*

Tom said things have plateaued since the initial discussions that led to the closing of the town hall and offices due to COVID-19. There were over 150,000 cases a few weeks ago. What is the trigger for closing the town offices to the public for a period of time? How should we respond in the future should the virus intensify again? We are doing contact tracing in the town office and if someone who has visited or works in the office becomes infected or has been in contact with someone who has tested positive, the entire office would have to be closed and completely cleaned, which is a lot of work. Phil said that the Boards of Health are given much more complete information and updating than what the general public is aware of, and asked if there is some way that that information can be updated in a timely way for the public. Bob asked if closing would affect the public only, and not employees, and Tom confirmed that that is the case.

*Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting*      *none*

#### *Town Administrator update*

##### **Committees**

We are still looking for Trails Committee volunteers (among others), if anyone knows someone who might be interested.

There were just two capital requests—one for a large Highway truck, which we were expecting, and another for a paving project. I have forwarded these to the Capital Improvements Planning Committee.

##### **Departments**

24 out of 37 line-item budget proposals have been submitted—not a great response, but not too bad. As in previous years, budgets not submitted by December 24 may be level funded. I do hope to get active responses from all concerned, though.

I discovered our e-mail system had been rejecting invoices for Baker Office Supplies since spring (at the DMARC level, so not able to be white-listed). With this vendor warrant, we have caught up with this fiscal year's bills, but will have Baker's bills for a prior fiscal year of \$1,064 to pay at the next Town Meeting. Our IT consultant has offered to help them set up their e-mail differently, but they will send our invoices through the postal service for the foreseeable future.

The new round of Community Compact “best practice” grant possibilities is out. Since we did not get the substantially larger Community Compact IT grant we applied for, I’ve asked the affected parties to draft proposals for this smaller grant. This would probably involve getting a tablet for the Assessors and a cybersecurity plan for the Town.

*Concerns of the Selectmen*

Phil asked about CARES funding – his understanding is that there is a lot of money left-over and asked if Conway was eligible for any of it. Tom said that there is money left-over, but it must be for things that are allowed. For example, regarding the Conway Grammar School, any expense related to the pandemic should be reimbursed. Bob asked if funding for the school lunch program was eligible under this program, and Phil and Erica both expressed the opinion that it should be covered. Tom said we will know when we do the reconciliation round later this month.

*Mail*                                *none*

*Announcements*                *none*

*Next Meeting:* Scheduled for Monday, January 11, 2021, at 6 p.m., via Zoom

*Executive Session: For Reason #6, To consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.*

**On a motion from Armstrong to move to executive session the open meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m. Erica voted yea, Phil voted yea, and Bob voted yea.**